GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT LEADERSHIP: WHAT DO WE HAVE TO HIDE?

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ABSTRACT

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The Army faces great challenges to meet the requirements of the future. New doctrine, equipment and means of employment will be required to succeed on technical, information-based battlefields of the future. We must also change the way we develop and select leaders for the future. That's what this paper is about. It examines the potential of the powerful personnel management tool of 360-degree, or multi-source feedback, as an evaluative and developmental tool for the Army. It also recognizes that a fundamental culture change will be required to implement the process and fully realize its many benefits. It concludes that the time for 360-degree feedback has arrived. The benefits for the Army of the future far outweigh any associated risks.

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> Horses have always understood a great deal more than they let on. It is difficult to be sat on every day by some creature without forming an opinion of them. On the other hand it is perfectly possible to sit all day, every day, on top of another creature and not have the slightest thought about them whatsoever.

Douglas Adam in Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency[1]

Open any modern Army lexicon and you will see words like "Force XXI," "Advanced Warfighting Experiment," "Army After Next," and "Information Warfare." This vocabulary connotes change - change to meet the challenges of a futuristic, information based battlefield dramatically different than that which we know today. Senior leaders recognize that technological advances will require changes in our organizational structure, equipment and doctrine to succeed on this battlefield. We must also change how we manage our human resources.

TRADOC PAM 525-5, Force XXI Operations, states "The rapid diffusion of information, enabled by these technological advances, challenges the relevance of traditional organization and management principles."[2] New battlefield requirements will replace, or at least drastically alter traditional command structures and hierarchical ways of waging war. In their place will be new, internetted structures that can diffuse command authority, hence new leadership and command approaches will be

required.3 The conduct of diffuse operations will require more horizontal rather than current vertical organizations. Such operations will require leaders capable of independent decision-making based on shared information and a clearly communicated commander's intent. To meet future challenges, "Army leaders will have to be continuous learners to an unprecedented degree, with the emotional maturity and flexibility to adapt and lead in a rapidly changing and lethal environment.4"

Until now the Army has assessed, evaluated and selected leaders via a top down approach based on ratings provided by immediate supervisors. Its leader development system has been an adjunct to this assessment system and tied to the needs of the current force. This may not be adequate to meet future requirements. The goal of any leader development system is to produce better leaders at successive levels of responsibility to lead units to better performance. It also must remain relevant to the prevailing environment of leadership requirements. "Our leader development system has served us well, but we must and we can do better."5

To take this next step the Army needs a system of multi-source feedback to assess and develop leaders. Also known as 360-degree feedback, such a process can help us do better. The Army has, as an institution, employed 360-degree feedback to a limited degree at USMA, Ranger School, and other training

courses. The Ranger Regiment employs it as a developmental

tool. More recently, the Chief of Staff of the Army authorized

a pilot 360-degree feedback program in the 212th Field Artillery

Brigade. This decision was largely based on the success of a

similar pilot at CGSC and CAS3.[6]

That brings us to the crux of this paper. Institutional

interest in 360-degree feedback places us on the right track,

but have we gone, or will we go, far enough? Does the Army's

current top down rating system allow us to choose the best

leaders? Or, can the Army benefit from a comprehensive,

developmental and evaluative 360-degree feedback mechanism? If

so, should the Army incorporate this information into evaluation

reports and make available to selection and promotion boards?

To answer these questions we will first define 360-degree

feedback, and then examine the benefits associated with the

process. Additionally, we will look at the benefits derived

from using 360-degree feedback in an evaluative role versus a

solely developmental tool. Finally, the paper will provide some

recommendations for the way ahead.

360-DEGREE FEEDBACK

What is 360-degree feedback? Peter Ward, a pioneer in the

field, defines it as a "Systematic collection of performance

data on an individual or group derived from a number of

stakeholders in their performance."[7] It is also known as multi-

rater or multi-source feedback. Stakeholders may be supervisors, peers, subordinates, and in some cases, customers. Essentially, a leader is rated from all around, hence the title 360-degree feedback. While traditional top-down evaluations measure what a person does and is largely results oriented, 360 measures how a person does a job and is highly focussed on process.[8]

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK

Let's examine some potential benefits of 360-degree assessments. Three aspects of this powerful tool are most applicable to the Army in its effort to increase unit effectiveness through enhanced leadership. They include enhanced unit effectiveness through higher cohesion and teamwork, greater leader legitimacy, and enhanced desires for self-development based on organizational values.

TEAMWORK AND COHESION

The 360-degree feedback process fosters greater unit cohesion and teamwork. It creates a feeling of full participation in achieving organizational goals and fosters commitment to, versus mere compliance with, organizational goals and values.

Webster's dictionary defines teamwork as "work done by a number of associates with usually each doing a clearly defined

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portion but all subordinating personal prominence to the efficiency of the whole."[9] In the Army, soldiers comprise teams within teams, each soldier possessing a special talent, working towards a common goal. Each has valuable input to the team effort. Under current structure and hierarchy, input from lower levels is often stifled or ignored. Subordinates tend not to provide input because it simply may not matter, or the risk is too great to the individual providing the input. Instead, they go with the flow, right or wrong, just to.finish an assigned task. However, in a team culture where people interact with each other continually, the observations of team members can be invaluable.[10]

The 1989 EXXON Valdez oil spill in Alaska's Prince William Sound is an excellent case in point of 360-degree feedback's role in building effective teams in traditional hierarchical organizations. It also demonstrates the perils of a culture in which other than top-down feedback is not the norm.

The Valdez was an Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) ship operated by the American Merchant Marine. The Merchant Marine is a hierarchichal organization steeped in tradition where the ship's captain is still called its master.[11]

Crew error caused the Valdez accident.[12] Investigation revealed that "reluctance among crew members to point out possible errors to captains and other officers had played an

important role in setting the stage" for the disaster as well as other accidents.[13]

Based on these findings, Jerry Aspland, president of ARCO, instituted 360-degree assessment. Assessments completed at all levels of the leadership hierarchy demonstrated dramatic improvement in safety records and teamwork. Even when crews were mixed through transfers and reassignments, crew efficiency increased and accident frequency was reduced. Crews collectively understood requirements and procedures. Crewmembers enjoyed a "shared vision of performance standards."[14] Team members began to feel their input was welcome and it counted.

The real benefit of the 360 process it that it lets people know that they can better work together - top down, bottom up and laterally.[15] The process attunes team members to the validity of multiple input, and much like on the Valdez, helps to avoid comments like that of the deployed Army CSM that "officers at all levels thought that only their ideas and decisions were correct."[16]

Another way to view the benefits of 360-degree feedback in a team environment is through the concept of "connectivity." Connectivity is the degree to which organizational members feel a sense of worth related to the work of the organization. "Individuals are connected in that they derive meaning with and

through other people about what is expected of them and how well they are doing."[17] Connected members know their opinion counts and have meaningful input into the team effort. In unconnected organizations, members are denied any feeling of ownership and perform out of necessity, rather than from a sense of "subordinated personal prominence".

Multi-source feedback also fosters commitment to, versus mere compliance with, the values and goals of an organization. The two are not equal.[18] Commitment includes a decisive moral choice or pledge to an ideal based on conviction and congruence of personal and organizational values.[19] Conversely, compliance infers actions based on yielding, for material award or avoidance of punishment, to a set of formal or official requirements.[20]

Traditional hierarchical authority fosters compliance, vice commitment.[21] This may prove problematic for future Army operations for two reasons: First, as previously described, the future battlefield will require flatter organizations to conduct diffuse, internetted operations. It will be more difficult to evoke compliance under these conditions. Secondly, even if evoked, mere compliance may not be enough. We will need commitment at every level to meet future challenges. Commitment will be required off, as well as on, the battlefield to maintain

the fabric of the organization in terms of retention, hard training, and values.

The process of 360-degree feedback fosters greater commitment to the organization by assuring members that they count as valuable contributors towards goal attainment and values. Instead of being seen as part of an unconnected, stratified system, they become interwoven in the organizational fabric. They internalize organizational values since they perceive themselves to be a part of it. It empowers soldiers to make decisions that one day will positively influence the battlefield.[22]

LEADER LEGITIMACY

360-degree feedback can increase leader legitimacy and provide a more holistic view of organizational capabilities and functions. Leader legitimacy exists when team members perceive the leader deserving, or worthy of, the position. 360-degree feedback accomplishes this through fostering increased levels of trust, creates open vice closed cultures and allows effective assessment of unit climates with a lesser need for other types of assessment surveys.

Trust and 360-Degree Feedback

Lack of trust in an organization can be devastating. A major finding of the 1997 Army assessment following the Aberdeen

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disaster was that "too many leaders have failed to earn the trust of their soldiers."[23]

360-degree feedback stimulates trust because leaders take visible action on feedback that subordinates provide. Subordinates identify perceived strengths and weaknesses. As an integral part of the process, a leader must develop a plan to improve upon identified weaknesses. The results are "communities of trust, pervaded by a sense of mutual accountability and obligation, [where] purposeful and meaningful actions can be taken particularly where individuals may be called upon to make disproportionate sacrifices."[24]

What naturally follows is an institutional accountability of leaders to their subordinates. They lead from a position of legitimate authority rather than authority based on position. Mere position-based authority may be inadequate for future diffuse operations.

Open Culture

Multi-source feedback contributes to a more open culture in which critical feedback from others is accepted, even valued for its potential to improve oneself and the organization.[25] Research shows that an open culture provides a solid platform for long term success in today's environment.[26] It increases open communications and virtually eliminates any room for a zero-defect mentality.

A 360-degree feedback program formalizes up, down and horizontal communications. As such, the 360-degree program communicates organizational standards and values. The feedback instruments can, and should be, designed to communicate what is important or what behavior is expected in the organization.[27]

360-degree feedback virtually eliminates the possibility of a zero-defect environment since ongoing feedback is an institutional reality and comments on weaknesses from all sides is expected. What really becomes important is what one does with the feedback.

Focus On the Organization

360-degree feedback further increases leader legitimacy because it causes the leader to focus on the organization rather than his or her position. All too often we have heard soldiers say that leaders care more about their careers than how the unit is doing.[28] The result is a negative unit climate stemming from a leader's failure or inability to look inside the organization. A quick look at all the "tools" currently in place to help a leader maintain a positive unit climate are indicative of a perceived requirement on behalf of superiors to monitor unit well-being. The requirement for instruments such as Dial-the – Boss, Unit Climate Assessments, and Sensing Sessions, are indicative that the climate of a unit must be monitored to prevent something from going wrong. While well intentioned,

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these external channels may actually erode leader legitimacy. Subordinates may perceive that the best way to resolve problems is from sources external to the organization.

On the other hand, 360-degree feedback causes the leader to take a proactive, introspective look at the whole unit. It gives the leader a better feel for what is really going on. He becomes much like the student of the great German conductor Gustav Mahler, who insisted that each principle musician in the orchestra sit in the audience at least once a week to get some sense of the whole.[29]

DA Pam 600-69 recognizes that "Commanders who have an accurate awareness of the perceptions and views of the soldiers in their units possess a definite leadership advantage."[30] This is precisely what 360-degree feedback does. It places leaders in the audience.

Once implemented, the leader receives feedback from all sources, hence some of the existing tools become archaic, or at least redundant. EO and Unit Climate Profile (UCP) questionnaires are very similar to prevailing 360-degree feedback surveys. An effective system of 360-degree feedback in an open culture could easily replace climate surveys and provide leaders with immediate climate checks.[31]

> "There presently are no highly visible, heavily
> resourced efforts to define, inculcate, and monitor
> the creation and sustainment of organizational

climates that challenge, inspire, and motivate all
ranks. This remains the case even after highly
visible fractures in organizational climates have
generated public concern and surely alienated many
commissioned and noncommissioned officers over the
past two years."[32]

360-degree feedback can provide the process to measure and

sustain a positive organizational climate and help develop

leaders at the same time.

DESIRE FOR SELF-DEVELOPMENT

360-degree feedback increases organizational effectiveness

by creating greater desires for leader self-development.

Research in the corporate word clearly indicates that feedback

from peers and subordinates is a powerful tool to encourage

leaders to change their ineffective leadership behavior.[33] The

process causes a leader to internalize comments. One executive

commented -"Rather than merely act differently - that would have

been shallow - I had to be different."[34] Changes are accompanied

by an internal shift that leads the individual and others to

feel the changes are real, not cosmetic, and likely to last.[35]

Typically, an organization would base its 360-degree

feedback program on the values and goals it wants reflected.[36]

Therefore, when behaviors change based on input from the

program, they are values and goals based. Behavioral changes

result from "What the individual deems important, versus

unimportant, his or her pattern of emotional instruments, what

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he or she puts energy into."[37] This is the essence of better

leader development in a values based Army.

Creating a Learning Culture

360-degree feedback contributes to leader development

through creating a learning culture. In this environment,

leaders lead not through hubris, but through a sense of

humility. Humility lies at the heart of a leader's capacity to

create a learning culture in the military community of which he

or she is an integral part.[38] In this environment, development

is continuous and self-directed.[39] This is what we need for the

21st Century Army.

DEVELOPMENTAL VERSUS EVALUATIVE: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Let's look briefly at the difference between developmental

and evaluative applications of 360-degree feedback. The basic

difference is a function of who gets access to the accumulated

feedback data. Developmental only feedback is provided solely

to the ratee. When 360-degree feedback is used for evaluation,

superiors have access to the information and may use it in

formal performance appraisals.

EVALUATIVE BENEFITS OF 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK

Why use 360-degree feedback for the more sensitive and risky

purpose of evaluation? The corporate world is starting to show

that when 360-degree intervention doesn't work, it's because it

isn't tied to anything.[40] "Lack of meaningful accountability in

development-only systems, especially on behalf of the ratee, is

one major reason why some practitioners feel that these

processes underachieve the desired goal of behavior change."[41]

The bottom line is that leader development, hence unit

effectiveness, may suffer when 360-degree feedback is used for

developmental purposes only.

The real danger of using 360-degree feedback for

developmental purposes only is twofold. First, the process is

risky for raters. Those who perceive that nothing will change

based on their input may provide faulty feedback or shun

participation altogether.[42] In other words, one may ask, "Why

should I risk saying something negative about the boss even if

it's for the good on the organization? Nothing will change

anyway." Secondly, and even worse, "Nonproductive behaviors,

[on the part of superiors that have been identified by others

and not acted upon] may be seen by peers and subordinates as

institutionally acceptable if not condoned."[43] Such behavior may

indeed become an organizational norm.

A recent study at the Air Force Academy provides an

excellent example of the frailty of 360-degree feedback as a

developmental tool only. In the study, cadets rated their AOCs

(Air Officer Commanding) at the end of each semester. Results

were anonymous and only seen by the AOC. Those with low scores

were encouraged to seek assistance from an available research team. "Few of the AOCs who obviously [needed] the feedback [took] advantage of the offer."[44]

"In developmental only processes, where the ratee is the owner of the feedback, with little or no accountability for action, little change should be expected, whereas performance appraisal settings have characteristics that allow for the establishment of accountability mechanisms for all parties involved."[45] Without an accountability mechanism such as a performance evaluation, more harm than good can be done through ineffective subordinate and peer feedback.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST 360-DEGREE EVALUATIVE FEEDBACK

Opponents of using 360-degree feedback as an evaluation tool argue that it would undermine authority and that office politics turn the process into a popularity contest.[46] Reprisals are also a concern.

With regard to undermining authority, multi-source feedback in no way changes the legal authority of a leader. We have already seen that authority can actually be enhanced through a greater degree of leader legitimacy. Increased legitimacy results when a leader acts on constructive peer or subordinate feedback.

Multi-rater feedback in an evaluative role may indeed decrease a leader's autonomy in that it would require one to consider subordinate or peer perceptions. It would not, however, negate one's responsibility to respond to orders in an urgent or crises situation. It would be taking 360-degree feedback out of context to presume that when it came time to "take the hill" that soldiers would have the option to obey the order or not. The essence of 360-degree feedback requires the leader to consider the input of others in a self-assessment process that better prepares he or she for exactly such potentialities. Through this process, the leader comes to understand the big difference between arrogance and empathy.

As for a popularity contest, research indicates that this is not the case at all. Friendship or politics does not bias peer and subordinate ratings.[47] "It seems that the makeup of a respondent group does not necessarily govern your results. Even people who like you might mention the unfavourable (sic) things under the cloak of anonymity."[48]

Reprisals are of course a concern, but not likely. With today's technology, mechanisms can be implaced to ensure anonymity and manage rater populations. Anonymity of peers and subordinates is the key; much like it is in developmental only programs.

The argument remains that 360-degree feedback can be a powerful tool to develop and evaluate Army leaders. It can identify, from multiple perspectives, individuals having values and skills congruent with those of the organization.[49] To fully realize its benefits, it must be linked to an accountability mechanism. Performance evaluations provide that very mechanism. "Subordinates, associates and supervisors are sizing up leaders anyway; their perceptions could be useful."[50]

CHOOSING THE VERY BEST

An evaluative 360-degree feedback mechanism would enhance the process of choosing the very best leaders for the future. It would provide a wider array of data points from multiple perspectives that would lead to a better assessment of leadership potential.

Currently, "leading American corporations are ahead of the Army in using "best practice" in making promotion decisions."[51] They use 360-degree feedback to address "strategically important populations" to identify and prepare future business leaders.[52] Other nations' militaries employ such a process, to include Israel.

The Army continues to choose leaders based on a top-down evaluation system in which normally a rater and a senior rater provide input to a promotion board to make selections. Several

problems plague the current system. The first is that it is
often neglected as a developmental tool. Raters often provide
rating instruments (OER/NCOER) to recipients on their way out
the door. Instruments such as the NCO Counseling Record, the
OER Support Form, and the new, well-intentioned, Junior Officer
Developmental Support Form are interpreted as administrative
burdens, that if only filled out correctly, will "meet the mail"
in the evaluation process with superiors. This is more often
the case at the intermediate levels where we should be fine-
tuning officers and NCOs for more senior leadership positions.

Additionally, the current top-down system provides only one
data point in the form of a written report by a superior to a
selection board. Most of those who have participated on these
boards will attest to the fact that this data point gets a few
minutes at best of a board member's attention.

Perhaps more importantly, especially at the more senior
levels, ratings are not based on day to day observations of
leadership and interaction with individuals. They are based on
perceived interaction with subordinates or interaction with
subordinates in a subordinate role.[53] Essentially, leaders
evaluate subordinates based on a limited set of observations and
rarely in a direct leadership role. Subordinates and peers,
however, have a more grassroots perspective. They see
unfiltered leadership in action.

Studies also show that these vertical ratings are "confounded by halo effect."[54] They can be the function of rater idiosyncrasies, writing ability and individual philosophies

Members of the corporate and military communities have recognized that current selection methods result in alarming rates of flawed leadership. Flawed leadership in this case is that displayed by those individuals who rise to the top of the organization but have subsequently negative impact on the organization.[55] For the Army, words like oppressive, over-controlling, and arrogant come to mind.

For years, there has been a concern in industry that first-line supervision is suffering because individuals with great technical skills are being promoted with little regard to interpersonal skills.[56] The same applies to the managerial level. The results are alarming. Corporate research indicates that over past decade, the rate of flawed leadership is 60-75 percent of managers.[57]

There is little hard evidence as to the degree that all of this translates to military leadership. However, retired Lieutenant General Ulmer suspects the flawed rate to be at 15-25 percent.[58]

Even in the face of little hard evidence, one doesn't need to look very far to discover examples of failed military leadership and their debilitating effects on the organization.

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At one extreme is the Aberdeen scandal in the late 90s. Investigation attributed this appalling disaster to leadership failure.[59] Also consider the story of a recent senior leader speaking at the USAWC who stated that the personality of his leader when he was a field grade commander was such that soldiers would be dispatched to climb the local guard tower to warn of his arrival. More recently, consider the flag officer at a major CONUS installation whose favorite remark at staff meetings was that his number one rule was to "keep them fighting among themselves; that way they can't gang up on me." Then there is that leader in many institutional memories with whom an office call or unit visit was paramount to a trip to Dante's innermost rings. Not yet mentioned are the more public instances in which senior leaders at all levels are apprehended for one crime or another.

Of course, not all leaders fall into one of these categories. Considering the above, however, LTG Ulmer was correct in that there is enough anecdotal evidence to make his 15-25 percent estimate more than a suspicion.[60]

As previously stated, selection errors, leading to flawed leadership, have an extremely debilitating effect on an organization. In the corporate world the price is profits. In the military, the price of flawed leadership is retention,

quality of life, ineffective units, and ultimately blood. The
"larger institutional sin is that they are preventable."[61]

360-DEGREE FEEDBACK AND SELECTION BOARDS

Use of multiple raters in upward feedback mitigates the
idiosyncrasies and biases inherent in other single-source
ratings and subordinates provide a perspective on performance-
related behaviors not provided by other rater sources.[62] Indeed,
each facet of the 360-degree feedback process, peers,
subordinates and superiors, provide valuable input to the
evaluation and selection process.

Peer Ratings

Peer ratings provide valuable input to selection boards.
They provide "believable observations" of behavior and how
fellow leaders interact and play as part of the team. Rather
than emphasizing individual performance and rewards, peer
ratings tell how colleagues interact with equals towards
upholding values and accomplishing the goals of the larger
entity. Digital Equipment Company, based in Maynard,
Massachusetts found that "peers know employees behaviors best
and insist on giving more valid ratings."[63] As early as 1947, in
a post World War II study to determine what best predicted
success of Marine Corps platoon leaders in combat, researchers
determined that peer ratings, vice superior officer or trainer

ratings, were more predictive of actual success in combat. The authors of the study attributed this to what they coined as "informed judgement".[64] Additionally, many corporations now recognize that without peer ratings, it is "nearly impossible to evaluate members of self-directed teams."[65]

Self Ratings

Let's turn now to the value of self-assessments. Research shows that congruence of self and others' ratings are closely related to an individual's performance, leadership and potential.[66] In an interesting recent study by the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), only ten percent of managers saw themselves as others did.[67] When related to dealing with people, over-rating self constituted the most common discrepancy by a factor of two. The Strategic Leader Development Inventory used at the Army War College yields somewhat contrary results where a significant number of senior army officers tend to under-rate themselves. The point is, however, that congruence of self and others' ratings render positive organizational outcomes. Over-estimators of self produced the most negative outcomes.[68] Once again, research shows that how a person sees him or her self relative to others is indicative of potential positive or negative organizational outcomes. It is, therefore, valuable input to a selection or promotion board.

Subordinate Ratings

Of all perspectives of 360-degree feedback, research overwhelmingly shows that subordinate appraisals provide the best indicator of an individual's potential to lead. This is recognized in the corporate world and borne out by several military studies. "Curiously, subordinates have proved to be better evaluators of potential performance than have superiors."[69] Three studies well illustrate these interesting phenomena.

At a United States Military Academy, 1235 freshman cadets were surveyed concerning squad leaders' leadership. Military officers also rated the squad leaders. In the study, superior ratings were less reliable than subordinate ratings. Differences were attributed to the fact that the superior military officers admitted they had only rarely seen the squad leaders interacting with subordinates.[70] Corporate researchers have also shown that "subordinates are excellently positioned to view and evaluate leadership behaviors. Indeed, they may have more complete and accurate information about many leadership behaviors than supervisors have."[71]

In a study of 186 USNA graduates on duty in the fleet, researchers compared evaluations of superiors, USNA records and 793 subordinates.[72] Once again, in this study leadership

qualities were "much more clearly identified by their subordinates than by their superiors."[73]

One final study compared the performance of cadet squadrons at the U.S. Air Force Academy. Interestingly enough, researchers discovered a clear difference in the way that subordinates see their officer leaders in upper versus lower performing units.[74]

Each of these studies, independently conducted, clearly demonstrated the value of subordinate ratings in determining leadership qualities and potential. This information could prove invaluable to a selection board. In the words of LTG Ulmer, "Only the led know for certain the leader's moral courage, consideration for others, and commitment to unit above self."[75]

Superior Ratings

Superiors represent the third element of input of 360-degree feedback that should be presented to selection boards. They indeed play a major role in the evaluation and selection process. Superiors provide experience, judgement and insight to the selection process. Additionally, under a fully implemented system of 360-degree feedback, superiors would have access to previous ratings from all perspectives. They would have a more complete picture of each subordinate upon which to craft a well-informed rating. The rater, as well as the selection board,

would benefit from a wider range of data points. This broader perspective, coupled with the superior's insight and experience, provides a more in depth and accurate rating of leadership potential.

Summarizing, each perspective inherent in 360-degree feedback provides valuable input to selection boards and should be made available to them. The main point is to expand the amount of useful information to the board, hence be better able to select best leaders. Their best judgement would still reign supreme.[76]

To achieve maximum benefit, we need to institutionalize 360-degree feedback as a developmental and evaluative tool for army leaders. Recipients of 360-degree feedback must be held accountable for development or the process will be less likely to achieve its desired results. Additionally, it will provide Army leaders a wider array of data points and a more accurate assessment of leadership potential to select the very best of the best.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

We can now turn to recommendations for future actions for the military services. Recommendations will be made first in terms of process, followed by suggestions on how to record results of 360-degree feedback for presentation to selection boards.

GENERAL

Continue to field 360-degree feedback to units as a developmental tool. Because of the volatile nature of 360-degree feedback, especially in hierarchical structures like the military, implementation should be evolutionary versus revolutionary to effect required cultural change.[77] Army leadership should establish milestones for full implementation to minimize delay of this valuable product to the field. All too often, especially with controversial improvements, we tend to drag things out and loose maximum benefit.

In the fielding process, we need to develop instruments for different leadership levels so that they are understandable by the users in the field. "You can't give the same questionnaire to a clerical worker as you would a manager."[78]

The Army should implement training in 360-degree feedback early in leader careers. PLDC, WOBC, and OBC are the right places.[79] Units should also integrate 360-degree feedback into training schedules. The Ranger Regiment already does this with great success.[80]

The Army should use 360-degree input to evaluate leaders starting at the squad and platoon level. This would allow for early exposure based on previous training and begin to inculcate the required cultural changes at the lowest level.

Army senior leadership must also embrace the system to be effective. Almost everyone consulted would agree that this mechanism of leadership evaluation and development would require a major culture change in the Army. Peter Schein unequivocally states that such major culture changes require what he terms "Primary Embedding Mechanisms." In this process, leaders at the highest level must measure and control the process of culture change on a regular basis. They must also model, coach and teach the process of cultural change.[81] Before lower level implementation can be effective, senior leaders must blaze the trail to better leader selection and development. Imagine the impact on Army culture if the Chief of Staff of the Army directed that the process would begin with all division commanders and above subjecting themselves to a leadership assessment by peers and subordinate commanders and staff. There could be no stronger message that changes were afoot in the organizational culture.

PROCESS AND PRACTICE

Let us focus now on how to implement the 360-degree process for evaluation purposes in the field. This is by no means an all-encompassing treatment of the subject, but does lay out a framework for implementation.

After a specified time in the unit in a given position, a leader would receive formal 360-degree feedback. It would be evaluative in the sense that the ratee's leader would be provided the results, who in turn would coach the ratee in crafting a developmental action plan.

A second 360-degree feedback would be conducted after 6 months or halfway through the evaluation period. Again, the ratee and superior would discuss the results from a developmental perspective and update or amend the developmental action plan.

A third assessment would be conducted prior to the end of the rating period. This would be the basis for changing the developmental action plan and provide input for the period's NCOER/OER.

That leaves us with the question of how to record the results. I suggest two possibilities. The first would provide leaders/raters at a given level the input from the 360 process. They would remain the final arbiters in crafting the evaluation.[82] Certain obligatory comments on the results would be required. Using numerical scales in each category with narrative comments would appear to be the best practice.

The preferred option would require raters to complete a mandatory section of the NCOER/OER that would break out actual

rater data from each 360 perspective. Table 1 provides a

suggested format to break out rater data.[83]

Your Score		Low	All Others	High
Self	4.00		X	
Superiors	3.56			X
Peers	4.75	X		
Subordinate	3.42		X	
Other	4.10		X	

Table 1: Breakout of Rater Data

The evaluation form section would depict actual scores and

how a rated leader fared against all others in the organization

for a given position. The left side of Table 1 depicts a rating

based on a one to five scale. The table depicts normative data

on the right with low being one and high being five. The

superior completing the evaluation would also be required to

summarize narrative comments from each perspective as well as

provide his or her own input. With either option, promotion and

selection boards would receive a much wider array of data points

than under the current system. Board members could then make

better-informed choices of who will lead our future Army.

CONCLUSION

This paper is about 360-degree feedback and its potential for developing the best leaders for the future Army. It shows that 360-degree feedback can increase unit effectiveness through better teamwork, leader legitimacy and improved organizational climate. 360-degree feedback also provides much needed additional data points to select future leaders and reduce the rate of flawed and failed leadership.

This paper argues to use 360-degree feedback for developmental and evaluative purposes. Such application would establish leader accountability in the developmental process. This is much more promising than the other course of action of "leaving individuals to pry open their own souls and carefully examine their own weaknesses in an effort to be all you can be.[84]

Implementing 360-degree feedback as an evaluative tool would demonstrate the Army's seriousness as an institution to change its culture to better meet the needs of the future. This includes better-communicated values at all levels. LTG Ulmer notes that

> "If in fact leadership is important, we need to develop more effective ways to measure it than we now possess. We have found no way to verify the presence or absence of some crucial leadership behaviors other than to query the followers. If the institution cannot come to grips with this fact, it will never reduce significantly the error rate in leader selection."[85]

Also, when referring to future leadership needs, Paul Van Riper and MG Robert Scales accurately surmised that "leadership far more than technology will determine who wins and who loses."[86] If leadership indeed determines the victor, it deserves our utmost attention. Egos must take a back seat to a process that allows the Army, as an institution, to select the very best to lead our soldiers on the battlefields of the future.

Finally, 360-degree feedback is not a silver bullet. It is a performance management device that can help select the very best leaders in an organization to serve its members.[87] We must, as an institution that requires commitment and sacrifice, be able to tell, for success in the future, whether a unit has been led, or merely bled.[88] In counting the costs of potential flawed or failed leadership, the potential of a few wounded egos is worth the risk.

WORD COUNT = 5992

ENDNOTES

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